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U.S. Customs

IMPORTING A CAR

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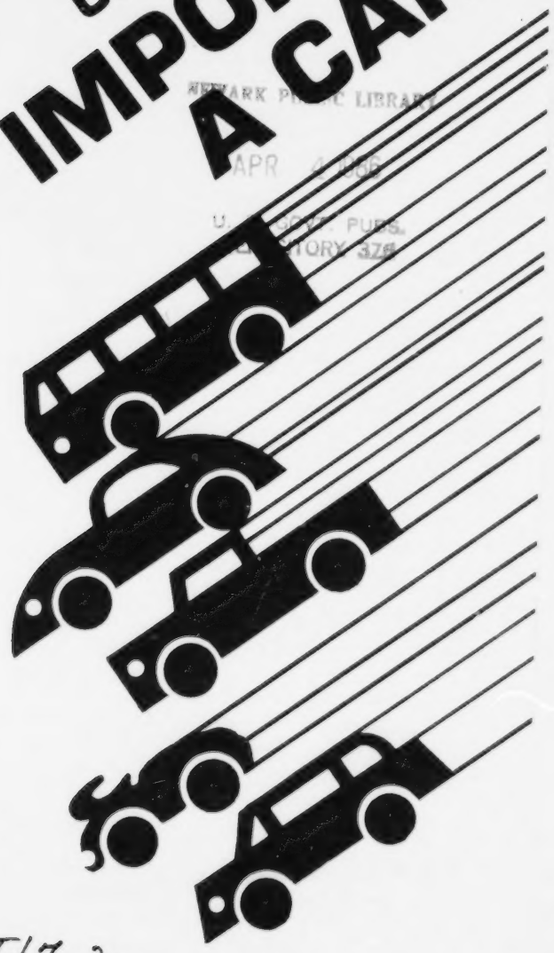

T17.2:

IMPORTING A CAR

WARNING!

Imported motor vehicles are subject to safety standards under the Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966, and air pollution control standards under the Clean Air Act of 1968.

Most vehicles manufactured abroad in conformity with U.S. standards are exported for sale in the U.S. It is unlikely that a vehicle obtained abroad meets these standards. Be skeptical of claims by a foreign dealer or other seller that a vehicle meets these standards, or can readily be brought into compliance. Nonconforming vehicles entering the U.S. must be *brought into compliance, exported, or destroyed.*

See pages 5—7 for general requirements

This pamphlet provides essential information for U.S. residents, military or civilian Government employees, and foreign nationals who are importing a vehicle into the U.S. It includes U.S. customs requirements and those of other agencies whose regulations we enforce. Since Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Transportation requirements are subject to frequent change, we recommend you contact these agencies before buying a vehicle abroad. Their addresses are on pages 6 and 7.

Our leaflets, *Know Before You Go (Customs Hints for Returning U.S. Residents),* and *Customs Hints for Visitors (Nonresidents),* contain general information for persons entering the U.S. Request them from your nearest Customs office; U.S. Customs, P.O. Box 7407, Washington, D.C. 20044; or Embassies and consulates abroad.

PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS

Arrangements for shipping a vehicle are made by the owner. Have your shipper or carrier notify you of the vehicle's arrival date so that Customs can clear it. Shipments are cleared at the first port of entry unless

you arrange for a freight forwarder abroad to have the vehicle sent in bond to a Customs port more convenient to you.

Customs officers are prohibited by law from acting as agents or making entries for an importer. However, you may employ a commercial customhouse broker to handle your entry.

DOCUMENTATION

For Customs clearance you will need the shipper or carrier's original bill of lading, the bill of sale, foreign registration, and any other documents covering the vehicle. Statements assuring that the vehicle conforms to U.S. safety and clean air standards should be obtained from the foreign manufacturer in advance.

See pages 7 and 8 for driver's license and tag requirements.

CLEANING UNDERCARRIAGE

To safeguard against importation of dangerous pests, the U.S. Department of Agriculture requires that the undercarriage of imported cars be free from foreign soil. Have your car steam sprayed or cleaned thoroughly before shipment.

YOUR CAR IS NOT A SHIPPING CONTAINER

For your own safety, security, and convenience, DO NOT use your car as a container for personal belongings.

- Your possessions are susceptible to pilferage while the vehicle is on the loading and unloading docks and in transit.
- Many shippers and carriers will not accept your vehicles if it contains personal belongings.
- The entire contents of your car must be declared to Customs on entry. Failure to do so can result in a fine and seizure of the car and its contents.

DUTIABLE ENTRY

Foreign-made vehicles imported into the U.S., whether new or used, either for personal use or for sale, are dutiable at the following rates:

	'85	'86	'87
Autos	2.6%	2.6%	2.5%
Trucks valued at $1,000 or more	25%	25%	25%
Motorcycles up to 700cc	4%	3.9%	3.7%
Motorcycles over 700cc: Same as above until total imports reach a specified level, then maximum rates:	24%	18.9%	13.7%

Duty rates are based on price paid or invoice price. Vehicles imported from certain Communist countries have a higher duty rate. Most Canadian-made vehicles are duty-free.

As a returning U.S. resident, you may apply your $400 Customs exemption and those of accompanying family members toward the value of the vehicle if it:

- Accompanies you on your return
- Is imported for personal use
- Was acquired during the journey from which you are returning.

For Customs purposes, a returning U.S. resident is one who is returning from travel, work, or study abroad.

After the exemption has been applied, a flat duty rate of 10% is applied toward the next $1,000 of the vehicle's value. The remaining amount is dutiable at the regular duty rate.

FREE ENTRY

U.S. CITIZENS EMPLOYED ABROAD, or Government employees returning on TDY or voluntary leave, may import a foreign-made car free of duty provided they enter the U.S. for a short visit, claim nonresident status, and export the vehicle when they leave.

MILITARY AND CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES of the U.S. Government returning at the end of an assignment to extended duty outside the Customs territory of the U.S. may include a conforming vehicle among their duty-free personal and household effects. The auto must have been purchased abroad and be in its owner's possession prior to departure. Generally, extended

duty is perceived as 140 days or more. Navy personnel serving abraod a U.S. naval vessel or supporting naval vessel from its departure from the U.S to its return after an intended overseas deployment of 120 days or more are entitled to the extended duty exemption.

NONRESIDENTS may import a vehicle duty-free for personal use if the vehicle is imported in conjunction with the owner's arrival. Conforming vehicles so imported may remain in the U.S. indefinitely. Non-conforming vehicles must be exported after one year, and may not be sold in the U.S. Conforming vehicles imported under duty-free exemption are dutiable if sold within one year of importation. Duty must be paid at the most convenient Customs office before the sale is completed.

CARS IMPORTED FOR OTHER PURPOSES

An automobile and its usual equipment may be entered free of duty into the U.S. by a nonresident for a temporary stay to take part in races or other specific contests. If the contests are for other than money purposes, the car may be admitted for 90 days without formal entry or bond if the customs officer is satisfied as to the importer's identity and good faith. The vehicle becomes subject to forfeiture if it is not exported, or if a bond is not given within 90 days after the date of importation. Bond is taken in an amount equal to twice the car's estimated duty. Cash may be deposited in lieu of surety on the bond and will be refunded if the vehicle is exported within the time limit and under Customs supervision. If the car is brought in for sale or for sale on approval, entry under bond will not be accepted.

Automobiles may be entered without payment of duty as a temporary importation under bond if brought in for alterations or repairs; as samples for taking orders; for experimental, testing, review, or study purposes; by illustrators and photographers for use solely as models in their own establishments; and as professional equipment and tools of trade. The length of stay is limited to 1 year from the date of importation, with 1-year extensions possible, not to exceed a total of 3 years.

SAFETY STANDARDS

Automobiles and certain automobile equipment, manufactured on or after January 1, 1968, must

conform to applicable Federal motor vehicle safety standards of the Department of Transportation (DOT). The importer must file a declaration, DOT Form HS-7, at the time of entry as to whether the vehicle conforms to these standards. The original manufacturer is required to affix a label to the vehicle certifying that these standards have been met. Vehicles that do not bear a certification label attached by the original manufacturer must be entered under bond. Data to substantiate conformity may be attached to the Form HS-7 to expedite release of the bond.

A nonconforming automobile admitted under bond (cash or surety) must be brought into conformity within 120 days after importation unless an extension is granted by DOT. In either case, conformity must be substantiated within 180 days.

Trailers, motorcycles (including mopeds), and certain equipment are also subject to DOT safety standards. If they are not certified by the original manufacturer, the bonding process also applies.

Inquiries rega.ding motor vehicle safety standards should be directed to:

U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Office of Vehicle Safety Compliance, NEF-32
400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

EMISSION STANDARDS

All passenger cars and light trucks, beginning with the 1968 model, must be certified as meeting crankcase and exhaust emission standards.

Note: If a pre-1968 model car is being imported and the engine has been replaced, emission control standards must be met.

With the 1971 model, fuel evaporative emission standards must also be met.

Beginning with the 1976 model, vehicles are subject to EPA catalyst retrofit requirements.

All complying 1971 and later models must bear a visible label in the engine compartment stating that the vehicle conforms to U.S. standards. This label will read

"Vehicle Emission Control Information" and will include the full corporate name and trademark of the manufacturer.

For earlier models, the importer should verify conformity with the vehicle manufacturer. A nonconforming vehicle may be admitted under bond provided it will be brought into conformity within 90 days after importation into the U.S.

EPA standards apply to motorcycles manufactured after December 31, 1977.

A declaration, EPA form 3520-1, must be filed at time of entry for all nonconforming imported motor vehicles.

Obtain additional information on emission control standards from:

Investigations/Imports Section
Manufacturers Operations Division (EN-340F)
U.S. EPA, Washington, D.C. 20460

A WORD OF CAUTION

Both the Department of Transportation and the Environmental Protection Agency advise that although a nonconforming car may be admitted under bond, modifications may be impractical, impossible, or require extensive engineering, and the labor and material cost may be unduly expensive.

Bonds required may be up to three times the value of the car, and it may be difficult to find a broker who will post a bond. In addition, the broker may require that the person who imports the car post more than half the bond with his own money.

EXCEPTIONS

The following vehicles need not conform to emission or safety standards, but may NOT be sold in the U.S. and may require EPA and DOT declarations.

- Those imported by nonresident visitors for personal use not exceeding one year.
- Those belonging to members of foreign armed forces, foreign diplomatic personnel, and members of public international organizations on assignment in the U.S.
- Those imported for display, competition, or testing, provided they are not licensed for use on public roads.

DRIVER'S PLATES AND PERMITS

Imported cars should bear the International Registration Marker. The International Driving Permit, issued in five languages, is a valuable asset. Consult an international automobile federation or your local automobile club about these documents.

U.S. RESIDENTS importing a new or used car should consult the Department of Motor Vehicles in their state of residence about temporary license plates.

NATIONALS OF CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICAN countries which have ratified the Inter-American Convention of 1943 may drive their cars in the U.S. for touring purposes for 1 year or the validity of the documents, whichever is shorter, without U.S. license plates or U.S. driver's permits, provided the car carries the International Registration Marker and registration card, and the driver has the International Driving Permit.

MOTORISTS VISITING THE UNITED STATES as tourists from countries which have ratified the Convention on International Road Traffic of 1949 may drive in the U.S. for 1 year with their own national license plates (registration tags) on their cars, and with their own personal driver's licenses.

MOTORISTS FROM CANADA AND MEXICO are permitted to tour in the U.S. without U.S. license plates or U.S. driver's permits, under agreements between the United States and these countries.

MOTORISTS FROM A COUNTRY NOT A PARTY to any of the above agreements must secure a driving permit in the U.S. after taking an examination.

FOREIGN NATIONALS employed in the U.S. may use their foreign license tags from the port of entry to their destination in the U.S.

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